

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
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TAGS: PFOR, EEWT, CVIS, RO

SUBJECT: SENATE HEARING ON ROMANIAN WAIVER EXTENSION,
SEPTEMBER 8

REF: STATE 221816

1. SUMMARY: SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ON ROMANIAN WAIVER
EXTENSION WENT RELATIVELY SMOOTHLY, AND WE EXPECT SENATE
COMMITTEE'S ACQUIESCENCE ON WAIVER EXTENSION. HUNGARIAN
MINORITY ISSUE, WHILE NOT EXCLUDED FROM HEARING, WAS IN
EFFECT RELEGATED TO SEPARATE "RUMP SESSION." HOUSE
COMMITTEE WILL HOLD PUBLIC HEARING SEPTEMBER 14. END
SUMMARY.

2. HEARING BEFORE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE PROCEEDED IN TWO SESSIONS.
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MORNING SESSION, CHAIRED BY SENATOR RIBICOFF, MOVED ALONG

QUICKLY AND HEARD ALL PRINCIPAL WITNESSES IN HOUR AND A HALF WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE QUESTIONING. AT RIBICOFF'S REQUEST, ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN WAS ONLY ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN TO GIVE ORAL TESTIMONY. OTHERS (DOWNEY OF COMMERCE, PARSKY OF TREASURY, AND FEKETEKUTY OF STR) SUBMITTED WRITTEN STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD. AMBASSADOR BARNES ATTENDED AND, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM RIBICOFF, DESCRIBED RELATIVELY IMPROVED EMIGRATION PICTURE IN LAST YEAR AND HALF.

3. THREE CONGRESSMEN WHO TESTIFIED (KOCH, DRINAN AND MCDONALD OF GEORGIA) EXPRESSED VARYING DEGREES OF RESERVATION ABOUT WAIVER EXTENSION. KOCH AND DRINAN CALLED FOR SOLUTION BY GOR OF CASES THEY HAVE RAISED WITH AMBASSADOR NICOLAE, WITH KOCH ALSO CRITICIZING ROMANIAN TREATMENT OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY. MCDONALD, DESCRIBING ROMANIA AS HAVING "A PARTICULARLY TYRANNICAL REPUTATION EVEN WITHIN THE COMMUNIST BLOC", ASKED THE COMMITTEE TO KEEP IN MIND THE PROVISIONS OF THE BUCKLEY RESOLUTION AS IT DECIDES ON WAIVER EXTENSION.

4. RABBI SCHINDLER, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS, EXPRESSED QUALIFIED ENDORSEMENT FOR WAIVER EXTENSION. SCHINDLER SAID RIGHTS ENJOYED BY JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ROMANIA "ARE ON A FULL PAR WITH RIGHTS GIVEN TO HER OTHER MINORITY GROUPINGS." WITH REGARD TO EMIGRATION, HOWEVER, SCHINDLER SAID ROMANIA'S APPARENT POLICY OF "RESTRICTED, CAREFULLY CONTROLLED EMIGRATION" IS INCONSISTENT WITH LETTER AND SPIRIT OF TRADE ACT, AND THEREFORE HIS ENDORSEMENT OF WAIVER IS QUALIFIED. DURING QUESTIONING BY RIBICOFF, SCHINDLER ESTIMATED THAT 20,000 - 25,000 JEWS OUT OF TOTAL POPULATION OF 65,000 JEWS WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE ROMANIA; THUS, HE SAID, CURRENT RATE OF EMIGRATION AMOUNTS TO LETTING OUT ONLY 10 PERCENT PER YEAR.

5. ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN LAID OUT FOREIGN POLICY GROUNDS FOR EXTENDING WAIVER AND POINTED TO SOME IMPROVEMENT IN EMIGRATION, PARTICULARLY TO THE UNITED STATES. RIBICOFF SAID HE WAS DISTURBED AT THE UNEVENNESS OF EMIGRATION LEVELS; IF THE GOR WERE SINCERE, THERE WOULD BE A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STEADY FLOW. HARTMAN RESPONDED THAT WHILE THERE HAS INDEED BEEN SOME UNEVENNESS, THE MONTHLY RATE SINCE JULY 1975 HAS IN FACT BEEN FAIRLY STEADY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MARCH AND APRIL, WHEN A GOR POLICY REVIEW WAS UNDER WAY. MOST IMPORTANT, HARTMAN SAID, WAS THE PROGRESS MADE IN THIS AREA AND OUR ABILITY TO DISCUSS SUCH PROBLEMS WITH ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT, SOMETHING WE CANNOT DO WITH OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS.

6. OTHER WITNESSES AT MORNING SESSION WERE MILTON ROSENTHAL, CHAIRMAN OF U.S. SIDE OF U.S.-ROMANIAN ECONOMIC COUNCIL, WHO SUPPORTED EXTENSION OF WAIVER; MARK RICHARDSON, REPRESENTING U.S. SHOE INDUSTRY, WHO WAS AGAINST MFN FOR ROMANIA; FATHER FLORIAN GALDAU, CHAIRMAN, AMERICAN-ROMANIAN COMMITTEE FOR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES, WHO CALLED FOR MORE LIBERAL EMIGRATION POLICY AND ACCUSED ROMANIAN EMBASSY OF INFILTRATING "SPIES AND INFORMERS" INTO U.S.-ROMANIAN CHURCH COMMUNITY, BUT DID NOT ACTUALLY OPPOSE WAIVER EXTENSION IN HIS ORAL TESTIMONY; MARK SANDSTROM OF EAST-WEST TRADE COUNCIL, WHO STRONGLY SUPPORTED EXTENSION; ZN IRNBAUM, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR RUSSIAN JEWRY, WHO SAID OBSTACLES TO JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA HAD INCREASED RECENTLY AND CALLED FOR CONDITIONAL WAIVER EXTENSION ONLY UNTIL DECEMBER.

7. HEARING RECESSED AFTER THESE WITNESSES AND RESUMED AT NOON WITH SENATOR CURTIS IN CHAIR AND NO OTHER SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT. THIS INCONCLUSIVE "RUMP" SESSION FOCUSED ON THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY ISSUE AND THE PROPOSED CURTIS AMENDMENT TO TRADE ACT OF 1974. WITNESSES WERE Z. MICHAEL SZAZ, AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN FEDERATION; LASZLO HAMOS, COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ROMANIA; AND SZABOLCS MESTERHAZY, WHOM CURTIS CREDITED WITH AUTHORIZING SECTION 409 OF TRADE ACT ("FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE TO JOIN A VERY CLOSE RELATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES"). SZAZ DID NOT OPPOSE WAIVER EXTENSION PER SE, BUT CALLED FOR AMELIORATIVE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN REGARDING MINORITY RIGHTS IN ROMANIA. HAMOS AND MESTERHAZY OPPOSED WAIVER, AND CURTIS SAID WAIVER CERTAINLY SHOULD NOT APPLY TO SECTION 409. OUR READING, BASED ON TALKS WITH COMMITTEE STAFF, IS THAT THIS RUMP SESSION WILL NOT PREVENT WAIVER EXTENSION.

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8. ALTHOUGH COMMITTEE HAS NOT YET MET TO CONSIDER NEXT STEPS, STAFFERS SAY MOST LIKELY OUTCOME IS THAT COMMITTEE WILL TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION. WAIVER WOULD THEN BE AUTOMATICALLY EXTENDED OCTOBER 15 FOR ANOTHER YEAR.

9. TRADE SUBCOMMITTEE OF HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS HAS SCHEDULED FORMAL PUBLIC HEARING SEPTEMBER 14. PRESENT PLANS ARE FOR SCENARIO SIMILAR TO SENATE HEARING, WITH HARTMAN REPRESENTING ADMINISTRATION IN ORAL TESTIMONY AND OTHERS SUBMITTING WRITTEN STATEMENTS, BUT FINAL ARRANGEMENTS NOT YET MADE. AUSPICIOUS OMEN IS THAT CONGRESSMAN VANIK HAS TOLD US HE WILL SUPPORT WAIVER EXTENSION.

10. SOME DEMONSTRATORS, MOSTLY THOSE CONNECTED WITH THE APOSTOLIU GROUP, APPEARED FOR THE SENATE HEARING. ROMANIAN

EMBASSY HAS COMPLAINED OF THREATS AND OBSCENITIES BROADCAST
FROM A LOUDSPEAKER MOUNTED ON A VAN CIRCLING NEAR THE
EMBASSY SEPTEMBER 8. KISSINGER

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